

A new walks book provides information on all 21 Post Box walks, along with water-proof literature for the diving and snorkelling enthusiast to help them enjoy the magic of our pristine underwater world.

To support the tour guides and in the interest of their customers safety, all have been trained in Emergency First Response and how to use a VHF radio, as a lot of the walks are to remote parts of the Island. VHF radios have been ordered and will be available for the tour guides to rent.

There is still concern about liability issues which could occur when guiding the walks and there is only minimal maintenance being undertaken on some of the paths.

Overall, the project will enhance the walking experience on St Helena and we are very grateful to OTEP for their support.

Pamela Young, Director of Tourism, St Helena Island; director@tourism.gov.sh

The St Helena Environmental Information System, SHEIS (STH302)

The original SHEIS project was scheduled for completion in March 2006. During the final months of the project, it became clear that there were areas that needed further development. The Department for International Development (DFID) was approached about the possibility of extending the project for a further 6 months. They agreed and provided additional funding to invite the previous consultants back to St Helena to enhance SHEIS.

The consultants had a range of tasks outlined for them. They provided additional training in the use of SHEIS to managers, stakeholders, and other users. They identified further potential uses of SHEIS to St Helena by providing training to the Island's GIS Manager so he could train new users as the system expands. The consultants delivered training in portal applications for the Prince Andrew School. They participated in a public consultation on how to progress towards a National System to incorporate other government departments with the private sector and NGOs. Discussions took place with the St Helena Government (SHG) IT Department on issues surrounding long term security, systems back up, and general IT support.

The training the consultants provided was delivered using a computer suite at the AVEC Centre. This enabled 15 staff from Legal, Lands and Planning Department (LLPD), Agriculture & Natural Resources Department (ANRD), Environmental Planning Department (EPD), and St Helena National Trust (SHNT) to participate during one session. An additional one-to-one in depth training was provided to the SHNT Project Officer.

Discussion with the Prince Andrew School staff resulted in exchanges of ideas about the potential uses of SHEIS for A-Level students. Problems accessing the browser were investigated and solutions identified.

As the use of SHEIS expanded, it was identified that there was the need for a more powerful and efficient network system. The funding provided by DFID allowed for the purchase of an air conditioning unit, new browser software packages, printers, and UPS units to protect against power failures.

The ongoing development of GIS and its potential for St Helena has been recognised by all stakeholders, GIS Office, LLPD, SHG IT staff, and the SHNT. In order to secure its future, a 5-year business case and budget forecast has been presented to SHG to seek future funding to continue and expand this service to various departments and organisations on the Island.

Taken from Annual Report St Helena National Trust 2007-2008

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Ridding Tristan da Cunha's outer islands of alien plants (TDC201 and TDC403)

Like many other oceanic islands the Tristan da Cunha Islands in the South Atlantic have suffered from the introduction of alien species.

Thankfully, Tristan's feral goats, pigs and cats are now gone, leaving rodents as the remaining mammalian problem. However, invasive alien plants remain a threat to the island group's natural communities, including on the largely unaltered outer islands.

Both Inaccessible and Gough Islands in the Tristan Group are nature reserves and together form a World Heritage Site. The third outer island, Nightingale, is not a proclaimed nature reserve, but is effectively run as one, with a management plan in production. All three islands have active alien plant eradication programme funded by OTEP.

Inaccessible Island

The major effort is directed at removing New Zealand Flax *Phormium tenax* thought to have been introduced in the 1930s. The plant grows on high coastal cliffs that require qualified rope-access technicians to scale in safety. Two expeditions, in 2004 and 2007, have succeeded in removing all but a few plants, and a follow-up visit to remove the last few plants and any new seedlings is planned for 2009.

Nightingale Island

Again, efforts have been directed at New Zealand Flax. Most plants had been removed previously by Tristan Islanders, and in 2007 the remaining 20 plants were removed. Additionally, the alien Australian Brass Buttons *Cotula australis* was weeded out. This species is out-competing the endemic Nightingale Brass Buttons *C. moseleyi* and further eradication efforts are required.

Gough Island

Here, the main alien plant issue is with Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens*. This diminutive plant only occurs along a short stretch of coastal cliff near the meteorological station, and rope-access technicians are required to work in safety. It was first discovered ashore in 1998, and since then eradication efforts have been undertaken, utilizing mechanical removal, herbicides and heat treatment to kill the seed load in the soil. On several other southern oceanic islands this species is highly invasive. So far, efforts on Gough have contained the plant at decreasing densities but eventual eradication remains problematic and will require an ongoing effort for a number of years yet.

A management plan for alien plants

In tandem with the above eradication efforts in the field, the project team is producing a management plan and identification guide for Tristan's invasive plants; the former to include a quarantine manual to reduce the risks of further species arriving at the island group. Necessary quarantine activities will include inspections of ships



*Brian Schultz, level-three rope-access technician, descends the coastal cliff at Transvaal Bay, Gough Island, searching for the alien plant *Sagina procumbens* in December 2007.*

Photo: John Cooper



and their cargos in home ports for propagules (seeds and living plant material), as well as persuading passengers travelling to the islands to ensure their footwear and field gear have been adequately cleaned. For this, a bio-security officer is required in Cape Town, Tristan's main supply port. Quarantine controls are also required to avoid alien plants present on the main island from reaching the three outer islands.

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Marine Turtles, the UKOT Environment Charters and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (XOT003)

Turtles in the UK Overseas Territories (TUKOT) aims to progress the conservation, research and management of marine turtle populations and their habitats in the UK Overseas Territories, whilst highlighting the importance of the Environment Charters and the relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).



Fieldwork in Anguilla

Photo: Peter Richardson, www.mcsuk.org

TUKOT Anguilla

On 26th September 2001, Anguilla and the UK Government signed the Environment Charter, both parties making commitments to environmental conservation. A great deal of background regarding the Environment Charter can be sourced at www.ukotcf.org. Of the MEAs most relevant to marine turtle conservation in the region, Anguilla is signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention.

The status of marine turtles in Anguilla was recently reviewed. Anguilla hosts annual nesting of at least three species (leatherback, green and hawksbill turtles) but the populations are critically low. Foraging green and hawksbill turtles are widespread and appear to be locally abundant at some sites. Since 1995 all marine turtles in Anguillian waters have been protected by a temporary moratorium on turtle fishing. This moratorium was due for review at the end of 2005. The nesting populations in Anguilla have been subject to survey work of increasing detail in recent years and monitoring and research has expanded into the foraging grounds. Partners in this project are The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources (DFMR) and the Anguilla National Trust (ANT).

This summary was taken from the Marine Turtle Research Group at <http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/tukot/>. There is also further information on TUKOT in Ascension Island, BVI, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and TCI.

To contact the TUKOT team e-mail tukot@seaturtle.org



*A black-browed albatross
Thalassarche melanophrys (one of
the listed ACAP species).
Photo: Sarah Crofts, Falklands
Conservation*

ACAP - coordination of by-catch fisheries issues in the South Atlantic (XOT401)

In 2004 the United Kingdom, including on behalf of its South Atlantic Overseas Territories (SAOTs) – Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, British Antarctic Territory and Tristan da Cunha - ratified the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). Of the 26 species presently covered by the Agreement, 12 occur as breeding species in the SAOTs. For most of these, the SAOTs host significant proportions of the global breeding population, three of which are endemic as breeders to the Tristan da Cunha group. Albatrosses and petrels of the South Atlantic face a range of threats both on land and at sea. Chief among these is fisheries-related mortality. In most cases, this is exacerbated by a suite of other threats, the most critical of which is the impact of introduced predators, which is especially severe at Gough Island where introduced house mice prey on chicks of the Tristan Albatross and other seabirds.

A number of initiatives have been funded and undertaken to address the range of threats at international, national and local levels. These initiatives are collaborative in nature, involving a range of Government departments both in the UK and the SAOTs, Non-Government Organisations, research institutions, industry and private landowners. As a result of constructive interaction with the fisheries industry and strong collaboration with the research and NGO community, mitigation measures to reduce seabird by-catch have been developed, tested and implemented, leading to substantially reduced levels of seabird by-catch in the fisheries of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. Indeed, these two SAOTs are world leaders in the development and research of by-catch technology. However, in spite of these successes, the populations of most albatross and petrel populations continue to decline, indicating sustained or increased mortality in foraging areas. The vast foraging movements of these seabirds take them on to the High Seas and the national waters of other nations. This highlights the importance of engaging with other nations to promote an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, which includes minimising seabird and other by-catch.

In March 2008, Anton Wolfaardt was appointed on a three-year contract to coordinate activities in the SAOTs and metropolitan UK in implementing ACAP, and will be based in the Falkland Islands for the duration of this contract. Initial work has focussed on fulfilling the ACAP reporting requirements, conducting and contributing to reviews for ACAP Working Groups, preparing for the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee of ACAP, which took place in Cape Town, South Africa in August 2008, and reviewing the specific needs of SAOTs in relation to ACAP. Whilst there are differences between the SAOTs in terms of albatross and petrel conservation, there are also many similarities, and the cross-cutting nature of this project has already led to coordination efficiencies and opportunities for sharing lessons and experience. The ultimate objective of ACAP is to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels, and this project is being implemented to ensure that the UK and the SAOTs help meet this objective.

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